

Since the post-9/11 low in 2002, *total visitor spending* in Winnebago County has *increased by 31%* to *\$300.6 million*. The visitor industry is clearly an increasingly *important part of our local economy*.

It is gratifying to play a role in this **extended stretch of growth**, but we are constantly reminded that success in a **dynamic marketplace** requires insight and innovation mixed with lots of elbow grease – while keeping constant watch for **new opportunities** and **rising obstacles**.

We are proud of the past year's work, but there's still so much to do. The new regional brand, *Real.Original.Rockford*, created a foundation for a **bolder and more assertive marketing campaign**. Many other organizations have incorporated the brand's key elements into their identity and communications – though **we'd like to see broader adoption across the community**.



We have integrated **leading-edge tools** like database marketing, video podcasts, texting and micro sites, but it's imperative that we concurrently **squeeze more ROI** into our traditional communications vehicles.

We've heightened collaboration with industry partners to craft more **sophisticated and cost-efficient cooperative promotions**. We're investing in **new online capabilities** and that will expand our market reach and encourage even greater partner engagement.

New products are the lifeblood of destination growth, and **enhancing and expanding our visitor experiences** will pay future dividends. There are tourism development opportunities all across the County, but the area of greatest need – and highest payback – is creating a **unique and active downtown Rockford** for visitors and locals alike.

Some projects are underway and other great concepts are being explored. What we need is a comprehensive **action plan** that integrates **exciting vision** with a **strong sense of place** – but most importantly, one that can **actually be implemented**.

Our team is working hard with municipalities, nonprofits, private firms and residents to advance such a **downtown renaissance initiative**, because it's no longer a question that the destiny of an entire region can only be optimized when it surrounds a **vibrant urban core**.

“The downtown is the heart of the city. It symbolizes whether the city is worth a damn or not.”

Phil Hanes
82-year-old champion of the arts, urban renewal and conservation in Winston-Salem, NC

I agree completely with the succinct sentiment on this subject from Phil Hanes, the salty Southern textile tycoon. And I, for one, will be relentless in this effort. We hope you'll join us.

Thanks for your support,

David Preece
President & CEO
Rockford Area Convention & Visitors Bureau



Autentico. Original.

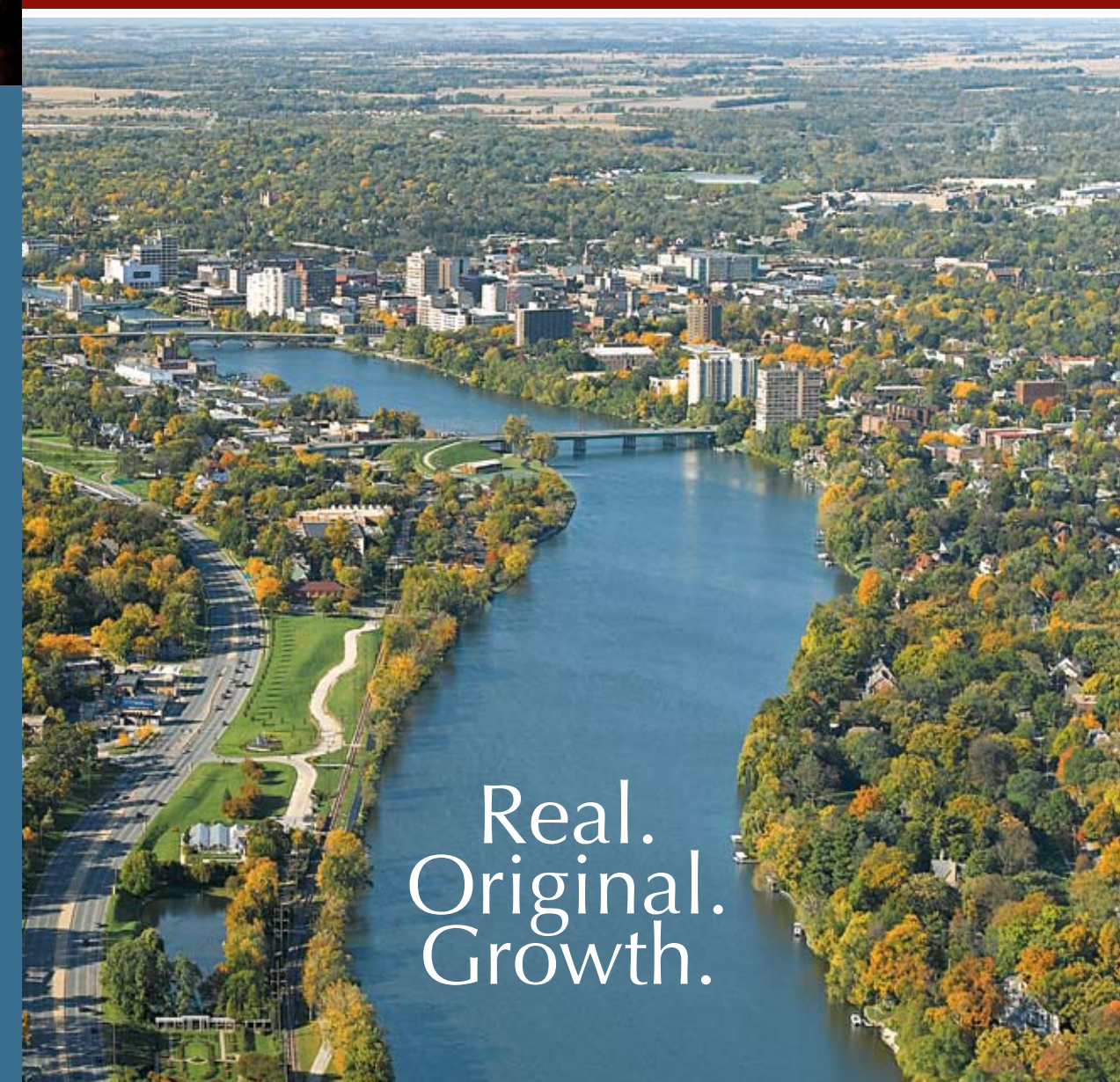
Verkligt . Originell.

Echt. Originell.

Real. Original.

Autentico. Originale.

Véritable. Original.



Rockford Area Convention & Visitors Bureau

102 North Main Street, Rockford, Illinois 61101 USA

Phone: 800-521-0849 or 815-963-8111 Fax: 800-691-7035 or 815-963-4298 gorockford.com info@gorockford.com





Some people are surprised when they learn that tourism contributes more than **\$300 million** each year to the Rockford Region's economy. That's more than \$2,400 of economic impact per Winnebago County household. This is **money that visitors leave behind** after they come here to play, meet or compete. They buy a meal, visit an attraction, pay a tournament fee, see a show, go shopping or settle their hotel bill. All of this spending winds its way through our community and **lessens our tax burden.**

The mission of the Rockford Area Convention & Visitors Bureau is to *add economic wealth* which *contributes to our quality of life*. And the singular mix of cities, towns and villages that comprises the Rockford Region gives our team a powerful portfolio of visitor experiences to promote to leisure tourists and meeting and event planners.

Leveraging this unique product, the Bureau crafts and implements an effective strategy to *promote our destination* and collaborate with partners to *fill the product development pipeline* with upgraded accommodations, new dining and shopping options, enriching cultural activities and invigorating recreation venues.

The positive growth we've seen in total tourism spending is *tangible evidence* of real progress. But even more important to us than the numbers are the personal *confirmations from our customers and partners.*



"Her service...was amazingly exceptional," declared a meeting planner when speaking of RACVB Group Services Manager Theresa Sellers. "We relied on her insight and relationships with the local community...[which] exceeded our expectations."

Teresa Houle
Association of Floriculture Professionals

On a 1-5 scale, meeting planners give Rockford a 4.3 satisfaction rating as a destination for meetings and events, and a 4.4 rating to the RACVB staff for understanding and responding to their needs.



"Just wanted to let you know that your marketing efforts worked with my family! I've lived in the Western Suburbs my whole life but had not thought to visit Rockford until I received one of your mailings. After...researching everything on your Web site, I planned a two night trip to Rockford for my [family]. It was a great trip. In fact, after hearing about what we did, [our friends] plan to visit Rockford, too."

Holly J.
Oak Brook, IL

More than 85% of previous visitors said they will recommend the Rockford Region as a leisure travel destination to their friends or family.



"This has been an exciting year for Anderson Japanese Gardens. A new visitor center, restaurant and meeting space along with strong growth and increased guest satisfaction. Our partnership with the RACVB has been instrumental in this success, helping us attract visitors from every state and 35 countries."

Brenda Warren
Director of Administration and Visitor Services

Ninety-two percent of our stakeholders say the RACVB effectively delivers on its mission to add wealth to the region's economy by growing tourism.

Key Performance Indicators

